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Contestants wait in line at Houston's Reliant Park to audition for *American Idol*. (Photo Nick de la Torre)

Idol Ambitions

The final Houston-area audition for hopeful *American Idol* contestants took place Aug. 30 at the Galveston Island Convention Center, where the judges said they were hoping for a female idol this year. Jennifer Lopez, Randy Jackson, Steven Tyler and Ryan Seacrest were at the Convention Center all day, passing out golden tickets. Without naming names, they said it's been the ladies who've come out on top thus far. "The strongest voices we've seen this year have been girls," Lopez said at a press conference earlier in the afternoon. "We had a lot of strong girls last year, but they were voted off one by one before any of the guys." Lopez speculated that the reason most of the girls get voted off so early is because

the majority of *American Idol* voters are women. Fellow judge Randy Jackson concurred – to an extent. "Girls are going to vote for cute guys," Jackson offered, "but I think that, yo, if a girl has the whole package and the uniqueness, girls and boys will vote for her." The best of the best in Texas doesn't necessarily mean they have to be wearing cowboy boots and auditioning with a Garth Brooks song, however. "Our first winner, Kelly Clarkson, was from Texas, and she wasn't a country girl," Jackson reflected. "When we go to any city, we don't say, 'This is going to be a country town.' We just expect great talent."

Future's So Bright

The Bright Light Social Hour – Austin's boys of summer thanks to their stadium-rock zeal with indie bravado – have been enjoying some well-deserved exposure, recently singled out in *Paste's* annual "Best of What's Next" issue. And on Aug. 23, the group became the first act to play at KUT's new Studio 1A in UT-Austin's College of Communication's Belo Center for New Media. Never mind that the \$11 million facility isn't scheduled for completion until next June. "We feel it's already got a lot of love put into it," observed bassist Jack O'Brien halfway through the lunchtime set for the hard-hat construction crew, which closed with the elastic Southern soul of "Detroit." KUT's new building will bolster its broadcast capabilities regarding the Cactus Cafe but also offer a lit-



The Social Hour boys have had a summer to remember. (Photo courtesy thebrightlightsocialhour.com)

eral window to the community with a street-level view into the studio. "You'll actually know there's a radio station here," joked host Matt Reilly. To top off the week, the Bright Light Social Hour headlined the 21st annual Hot Sauce

Festival in Waterloo Park Aug. 28. The strong bill also featured teen punks Schmillion, Foot Patrol's rubber sole, the worldly riot squad La Guerrilla, and Moonlight Social, which won the *Austin Chronicle's* Sounds Wars competition this year.



Armiger may be fighting back tears of joy on the venerable Nashville stage. (Photo courtesy katiearmiger.com)

Grand Ole Opportunity

Houston native Katie Armiger has grown up fast. Since 2007, when she was 16, she's moved to Nashville, toured the country, charted on *Billboard* and released three albums, including *Confessions of a Nice Girl*, which has amped up her national profile. Her video for "Best Song Ever" topped the Great American Country (GAC) charts earlier this year. And next month she makes her debut at the Grand Ole Opry. That's big news for any country artist and particularly sweet for one so young. "Every country artist dreams of the moment when they're given the opportunity to step on that stage where all of the legends of country music have played," Armiger says. "When you grow up in Texas and play all of the fairs and festivals, you dream of the Opry, but it seems so far away and something that's unattainable. It's hard to imagine the wave of emotions I'll be feeling at the time. I asked the Opry if it was OK with them if I just stand at the microphone and cry instead of sing." Armiger will perform two songs, including the ballad "Leaving Home," which became a graduation anthem last year for several high schools across the country.

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PUBLISHER/ EDITOR-IN-CHIEF STEWART RAMSER

EDITOR TOM BUCKLEY

CONTRIBUTORS JEREMY BURCHARD
LAURA C. MALLONEE
ALANA PEDEN
MATT PORTILLO
ANNA SALLACK

COPY EDITOR ANNE HERMAN

www.txmusic.com

WEB SITE DESIGNER WILLTHING
MAILING ADDRESS PO BOX 50273
AUSTIN, TX 78763

SUBSCRIPTIONS: 1-877-35-TEXAS

OFFICE: 512-638-8900

E-MAIL: INFO@TXMUSIC.COM

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The singer/songwriter/multi-instrumentalist formerly known as Annie Clark has style. (Photo courtesy losanjealous.com)

“Cruel” Exposure

Apparently, St. Vincent is ready for her close-up. Make that close-ups. As we approach the Sept. 13 release of her third LP, the John Congleton-produced *Strange Mercy*, the one-time Dallas resident and former *Texas Music* cover girl born Annie Clark is only going to be more

and more visible. Already, she’s been on the cover of *Spin*’s September “Style Issue.” (“Her electrifying on-camera presence and matinee idol/Audrey Hepburn aesthetic came through boldly,” the magazine offered.) She’s graced *Under the Radar*, too. And on Aug. 29, she appeared on *The Late Show with David Letterman*, performing live her new single, “Cruel,” a sleek, anxious number. Performing with her new band, Clark sang the tune with cool understatement while playing unusual lead guitar parts, such as an intriguing solo midway through the piece. But that’s not the only St. Vincent performance making the rounds. *Spin* has posted a clip of Clark performing solo *Strange Mercy*’s free download, “Surgeon,” as well as a similarly arranged cover of Tom Waits’ “Tango Till They’re Sore.” Also, over on the website Consequence of Sound, you can watch Clark perform three as-yet-unreleased *Strange Mercy* tracks: “Cheerleader,” “Champagne Year” and “Year of the Tiger.”

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Neal McCoy is receiving production assistance from Miranda Lambert for his 12th album. (Photo courtesy nealmccoy.com)

Real McCoy

After 11 albums, more than 25 charted singles and plenty of fans nationwide, Neal McCoy is back in the studio making what he calls the music of a lifetime. McCoy, who was named Entertainer of the Year twice by the fan-voted TNN/Music City News Awards, will be releasing his new album, *XII*, in January 2012. The collection of 12 songs, which is being produced by Miranda Lambert, Blake Shelton and Brent Rowan, is McCoy's first with new label Blaster Records. "Having Miranda and Blake involved in this project is huge for me," McCoy says. "Not only do they have great vision, but they know when to have fun and when to get serious – along with being fantastic musicians." McCoy's first single, "A-OK," will be released in October.

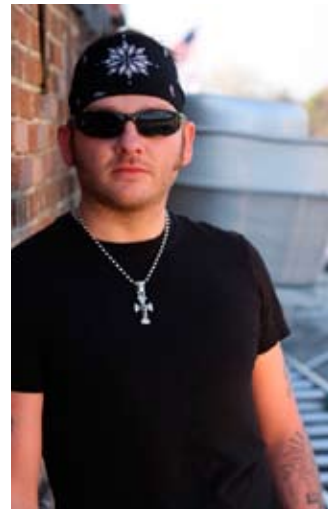
Growing up in Texas as the youngest of three, McCoy says his natural talent was revealed at home while singing 1970s Top 40 hits with his brother and sister. He then began performing in clubs, building his songbook and stage confidence, until he was discovered at a Dallas competition by Opry star Jane Fricke and eventually introduced to country superstar Charley Pride. Since inking his first deal in Nashville, the singer has several platinum albums and top-10 singles to his credit, and has logged hundreds of thousands of touring miles, including 13 USO tours. He's also been recognized with humanitarian awards by The Academy of Country Music

Awards and The Country Radio Broadcasters for his extensive work with the USO and the East Texas Angel Network, the organization he founded with his wife, Melinda, on behalf of East Texas children with life-threatening or serious illnesses. McCoy lives in Longview, Texas.

Charted

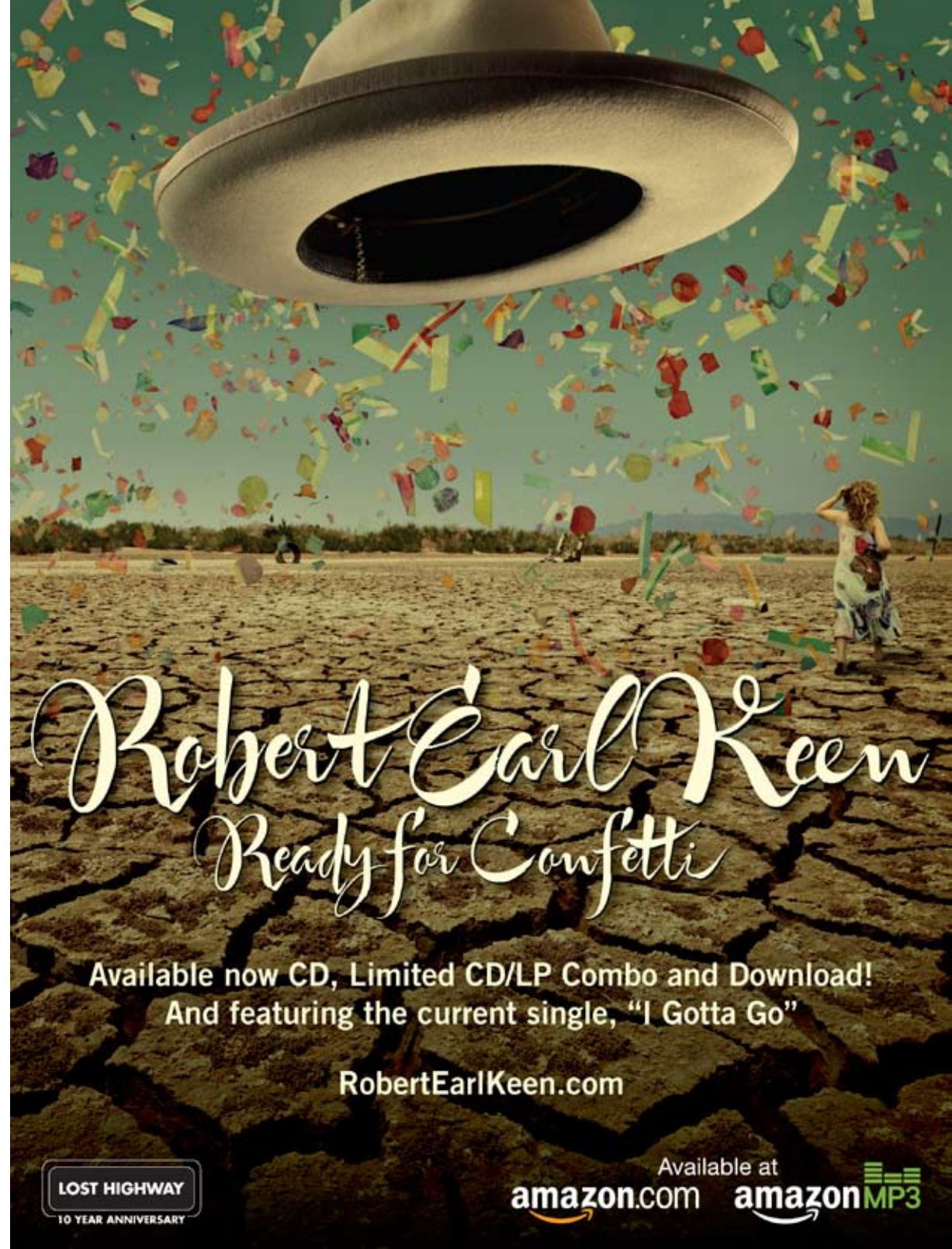
Kevin Fowler's six-week streak has ended. Stoney LaRue swept into the No. 1 slot on the Texas music chart this week (texasmusicchart.com) with "Velvet," pushing "Hell Yeah, I Like Beer" to second place. That's great news for LaRue, of course, who was No. 3 last week, but Fowler certainly can't be dissatisfied with his six-week run.

Behind Fowler, Casey Donahew Band, Eli Young Band and Josh Abbott Band round out the top five. Abbott's latest single, "My Texas," is a favorite across the Lone Star State (for obvious reasons), but has seen success elsewhere thanks, in part, to the presence of Pat Green, who's featured on the track. The song follows JAB's popular single, "Oh, Tonight." Turnpike Troubadours' "Long Hot



Stoney has the "Velvet" touch. (Photo courtesy stoneylarue.com)

Summer Days" is at No. 6 this week, with Jason Cassidy's "Honky Tonk Heaven" and Brandon Rhyder's "In the Country" just behind it. Adam Hood – a favorite of Miranda Lambert – is at No. 9 with "Flame and Gasoline," up from No. 13, and Granger Smith's "Sleeping on the Interstate" completes the top 10.



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Joe King Carrasco and the Crowns headline the Marfa Lights Festival Saturday, Sept. 3. (Photo courtesy joeeking.com)

Marfa Lights Festival
Around the Courthouse
September 2-4 • Marfa
www.marfacc.com

The Marfa Lights Festival, celebrating the mysterious lights that sometimes appear just east of this West Texas town, will be held on Labor Day weekend around the historic Presidio County Courthouse. Events will start at 5 p.m. Friday and continue though 6 p.m. Sunday, with music, food, a parade and arts and crafts. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the festival. In addition to the festivities at the courthouse, there will be a 5K run and a parade on Saturday. The festival's free outdoor entertainment series will open Friday night with music by Reno Perez followed by Destino Band. Saturday's entertainment lineup will feature the United States Army 1st Armored Division Marching Band just after the festival parade. Throughout the day there will be music, dancing, theatrical performances and a pet show. Saturday evening entertainment opens with local one-man band Andy Schneider at 6:30 p.m. The headliner Saturday night is Joe King Carrasco and the Crowns, who'll offer their unique mix of Tex-Mex rock 'n' roll. The entertainment continues on Sunday with local bluesman Grapejelly Jacobs, the Mystic Gitanas dance troupe and the Dry Creek Diggers. To close the festival, there will be one of Marfa's famous open jams. All musicians are invited to participate in the jam – just bring your own chair and instruments.

AUGUST

2-3

World Championship Goat Cook-Off

Richards Park
Brady
www.bradytx.com

2-4

Central Texas State Fair

Bell County Expo Center
Belton
www.centraltexasstatefair.com

Kerrville Wine and Music Festival

Quiet Valley Ranch
Kerrville
www.kerrville-music.com

Texas Music Festival

Bosque Bottoms Campsite
Meridian
www.txmusicfestival.com

3-4

Bluesfest

Bedford Municipal Complex
Bedford
www.bedfordbluesbbq.com



Patrice Pike performs at the Austin City Limits Music Festival Sept. 17. (Photo courtesy patricepike.com)



Buddy Whittington plays the blues in Bedford on Sunday, Sept. 4. (Photo buddywhittington.com)

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Texas City Music Fest by the Bay

Carlos Garza Sports Park
Texas City
www.bythebayfest.com

15-18

Octoberfest

Circle Park
Addison
www.addisontexas.net

16-18

Austin City Limits Music Festival

Zilker Park
Austin
www.aclfestival.com

17-19

Jazz Festival

Kemah Boardwalk
Kemah
www.kemahboardwalk.com

22-25

Trans-Pecos Festival of Music & Love

El Cosmico
Marfa
www.elcosmico.com

24-25

Old Pecan Street Festival

East Sixth Street
Austin
www.oldpecanstreetfestival.com

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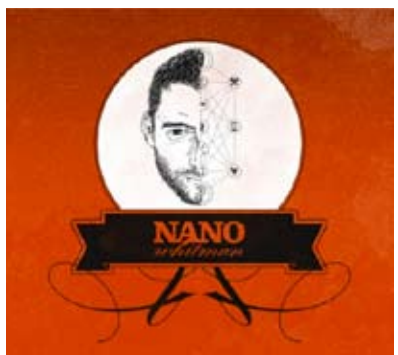
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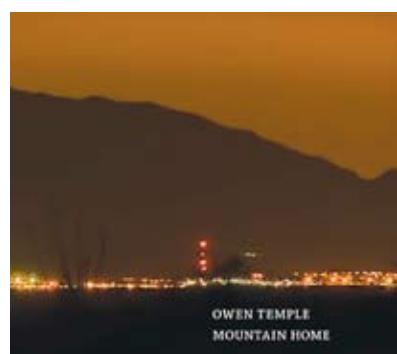
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Nano Whitman
I Leave on the Light
Every Glass
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No doubt – this is a breakup album. Fan through the lyrics booklet, and you'll read of a heart broken and roughly pieced back together, of a love gone stale and never revived. "Six months ago yesterday, I kissed you goodbye, my babe," Whitman tenderly sings atop melancholy keys, "but I don't know why I'm happier without you." Or take the heartbreaker "Sometimes I Love You," where he sings, "But here I am, in your bed, my head against your head, thinking thoughts about a future I could have instead." Whitman tells a bittersweet story riddled with regret and loss, but there are beautiful moments, too, when rays of sunshine peek through the gloom, such as on "Arms By My Side." "Every night I leave on the light," he sings over glorious horn swells. "Sun's gonna come up again, it'll be alright." In truth, this album is about more than just breaking

up; Whitman's open-heart lyrics are an exploration of the things that make us human. For example, on "28," which won him first place in the 2010 *Billboard* World Song Contest for Americana/Folk, he offers, "My best friend he died at 23 / I wonder if it really set him free" and "My mother's gonna turn 54 / I wish I talked to her a little more." Producer Lars Goransson (Blondie, The Cardigans, Fastball) gives the album a crisp and sonically delicate sheen to accompany Whitman's unshakeable honesty. Austinites may know him only as general manager of Home Slice Pizza, but here Whitman proves he's also an accomplished singer and songwriter. **- KEVIN ALLEN**



Owen Temple
Mountain Home
Self-released
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Temple has found a niche as a warm, literate country-folk poet, which suits him better than his earlier years as a con-

new releases

Aug. 9	Kevin Fowler	<i>Chippin' Away</i>	Average Joes
Aug. 9	Micky & the Motorcars	<i>Raise My Glass</i>	Smith
Aug. 16	Guy Clark	<i>Songs & Stories</i>	Dualtone
Aug. 16	Glambilly	<i>White BBQ Sauce</i>	Saustex
Aug. 16	Eli Young Band	<i>Life at Best</i>	Republic Nashville
Aug. 16	Eric Hisaw	<i>Ghost Stories</i>	CDBY
Aug. 23	Curtis Grimes	<i>Doin' My Time</i>	Self-Released
Aug. 23	Ana Egge	<i>Bad Blood</i>	Ammal
Aug. 23	Sunny Sweeney	<i>Concrete</i>	Republic Nashville
Aug. 25	Aaron Einhouse	<i>Aaron Einhouse</i>	Self-released
Aug. 30	Robert Earl Keen	<i>Ready for Confetti</i>	Lost Highway
Aug. 30	Sally Crewe & the Sudden Moves	<i>Transmit/Receive</i>	8-Track Mind
Aug. 30	Stoney LaRue	<i>Velvet</i>	Smith
Sept. 6	George Strait	<i>Here For a Good Time</i>	MCA Nashville
Sept. 6	Slaid Cleaves	<i>Sorrow and Smoke: Live at the Horseshoe Lounge</i>	Music Road
Sept. 6	Gary Clark, Jr.	<i>Blight Lights EP</i>	Warner Bros
Sept. 13	The Gourds	<i>Old Mad Joy</i>	Vanguard
Sept. 13	Reckless Kelly	<i>Good Luck & True Love</i>	Self-Released
Sept. 13	St. Vincent	<i>Strange Mercy</i>	4ad
Sept. 20	Kyle Park	<i>Make or Break Me</i>	Winding Road
Sept. 27	Sarah Jaffe	<i>The Way Sound Leaves a Room</i>	Kirtland
Sept. 27	LeAnn Rimes	<i>Lady and Gentleman</i>	Asylum-Curb
Oct. 4	Quiet Company	<i>We Are All Where We Belong</i>	CDBY
Oct. 4	Jason Boland & the Stragglers	<i>Rancho Alto</i>	Apex
Oct. 25	Kelly Clarkson	<i>Stronger</i>	RCA
Nov. 1	Miranda Lambert	<i>Four the Record</i>	Sony

tender in the "next Pat Green" sweepstakes. His voice, both literally and as a songwriter, has added depth over the years, making *Mountain Home* a new peak. There's a hard-won, understated wisdom in songs the caliber of "Fall In Love Every Night" and "One Day Closer To Rain" that echoes Temple's contemporaries (Mark Jungers, Adam Carroll, Susan Gibson, et al) as well as influences ranging from Haggard to Springsteen. The subtle funk of "Danger & Good Times" and the chutzpah to tackle Leon Russell's "Prince of Peace" acoustically show both a willingness

to stretch and the restraint to not ruin the woody vibe of Temple's best album to date. **- MIKE ETHAN MESSICK**

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(Photo courtesy Ian Moore)

Ian Moore had both the good fortune and misfortune to be a young, good-looking Austin guitar hero who came to prominence shortly after Stevie Ray Vaughan's death created an opening for the position. Joe Ely drafted the native Austinite for the recording and touring cycle behind 1992's *Love and Danger*, after which the eponymous group Moore founded with bassist Chris White, keyboardist Bukka Allen and drummer Michael Villegas became one of the top draws at legendary venues such as Steamboat and Antone's, rooms Vaughan had trod himself not too many years before. Capricorn Records soon signed the Ian Moore Band.

But Moore never wanted to be the next Stevie Ray. Fiercely intelligent and equally strong-willed, he'd always been interested in power-pop and roots-rock, and when those sounds dominated the third album he handed in to Capricorn, label president Phil Walden hit the roof, and Moore was let go. The musician and label owner even came to blows.

Now Moore is self-releasing the record, dubbed *The First Third*, the way it was originally recorded.

What's the story behind this third, unreleased album?

It's a long story, and I'm trying to encapsulate it so it's actually writeable. Basically, you've got to keep in mind that there weren't tons of indie labels when I was young. There were punk rock labels – Sub Pop and a couple of other ones – there were a couple of really bad roots-rock labels, and then you had major labels. There was no way to really self-release back then ... at least not as a serious release.

So when I started trying to find a place to put out music, I ran the gamut of labels and was having a really hard time finding a place, then I met Phil Walden, who was the president of Capricorn. I was a musicology major at UT, and at that point I was imagining I was going to be a journalist, Peter Guralnick-style, writing about roots music from the South and stuff. I had this deep love of soul music and blues and country and garage and stuff, and nobody I knew liked that stuff.

So when I met Phil, who'd managed Otis Redding and Sam Cooke, he had this history. He was the guy I wanted to be around. We built this really deep relationship, and he loved my first record. And pretty much from then on, he never liked anything that I did. We had this huge falling out, and the label ... many of the fans who'd dug the first record, just didn't get the direction we were going in.

Basically I felt like there was this one point where we kind of hit mainstream culture and just never hit it again. Those people came around us and just didn't dig it. The third record was just basically a tipping point for our career. The second record was received pretty coldly by the label as well, but the third record I actually physically got into a fistfight with Phil about.

How did that happen?

He was just so angry at me for making the record, and he wasn't very good at communicat-



Moore and his new band, the Lossy Coils. (Photo courtesy Stephanie Alexander)

ing his feelings. The irony of it is if you listen to the record, it's definitely the most focused, song-oriented album I've done. Now, if you listen to the record I released earlier this year, *El Sonido Nuevo*, I think the songs are great, and I'm really proud of the production, but it's an underground record. It shouldn't be, but it's in this realm. It's kind of like power-pop with little elements of psych and some hip classic-rock stuff, but it will never be a hit. And I know that.

The First Third, the one that I'm putting out now, is probably the best chance I ever had at mainstream success. But it's all about timing, and we were out of sync with the label.

Was it that they wanted the group to stay in that kind of blues-rock pocket and you were pushing against that?

I guess that would be the easy way. I'm trying not to be too verbose about it, go on and on and on, but I'm trying to illustrate that Phil's not a dumbass. The reason I would even entertain where he was coming from was he was my Ahmet Ertegun. By the time I started playing, Ahmet was sort of out of the picture. That breed of people who were really hip and sophisticated about music was pretty much dying.

You just don't have those guys anymore. The closest you have is like Gerard Cosloy, but they're all based in punk rock and post-punk – which is great, but I still think the Ahmet Erteguns and Jerry Wexlers ... that's

a whole other level of sophistication. Phil was one of those guys. So I honestly don't think Phil wanted me to stay in a blues-rock pocket ... I think he had this thing where he was like, "Dude, you're not being as deep as you were."

His perception, much like Clifford Antone's, was that the rock stuff I was doing was this bullshit kid stuff, and whenever I was playing blues, they honestly thought it was more sophisticated and spiritually more deep. That's why I even entertained it.

It wasn't that they wanted me to be this Stevie clone. I mean, I can see, looking back, how you could have that perception, but obviously me being the one who was making the music, and with the band and us, we had a trip. We were on a trip just like any other band, and the trip is what it is. You make your record, and whether good or bad, it's where you're at. We couldn't really change anything.

How long did it take you to get over everything that happened?

The way I manifest that kind of stuff ... I've had a decent amount of loss in my life, so I just keep going because that's all I know how to do. I formed a new band, and my manager, who'd been a huge part of my career, she hit a wall where she didn't want to do it anymore, and my band imploded, and all those things fell apart.

There was a period of everything kind of ebbing for me, as far as material success. But I felt at that point that it was the best opportunity for me to have some cultural gain. People weren't caring about me as much, so maybe I could grow some and be out of the spotlight for a while. That was a really positive thing, you know, but you never totally get over anything. I have places that I choose not to stand, but I have parts of me that get pretty pissed off about that whole time period, because it just didn't feel right to me. I wrote those songs – I wasn't thinking about how audiences might react to them. Now, I think that's why people like them so much.

– CHRIS GRAY